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SUBJECT: GHA 4: Citizen Magazine Chooses Self-Censorship
Because of Government Pressure

REF: A) Guangzhou 30534; B) Guangzhou 30533; C) Guangzhou
20890; D) Guangzhou 18191

11. (U) Classified by Consul General Robert Goldberg.
Reason 1.4 (d).

12. (C) Summary and comment: "Citizen" will hold back the magazine's tenth issue till next year due to government pressure--including blacklistings, electronic surveillance and direct warnings--put on the group since August. The Guangdong government has grown increasingly concerned about Citizen's popularity and the role played by new dissidents in the Guangzhou Humanistic Association, which publishes the magazine. The tenth issue was expected to be more controversial than previous issues, with articles on the Shanghai corruption scandal and protests in Taiwan. Comment: The combination of forwarding looking articles--with what at times appears to be an anti-government, anti-Party animus--has led the government to take a closer and harsher look at the journal at a time when rights activists throughout China have been targeted by authorities. Because of its political connections, Citizen had previously seemed immune to such pressure, but now it has also become a target.

13. (C) On September 28, Poloff and a representative of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) met with Hao Yuanwen, President of the Guangdong Humanistic Association (GHA), parent organization of "Citizen" magazine, and his assistant, Professor Yao Yuanguang (ref C and D). Hao and Yao described increased political pressure against the GHA since the last meeting with Congenoffs in August. Citizen magazine is published by Guangxi Normal University Press, which is known for its liberal publishing policies. Yao said that the publishing house is receiving "pressure" and the publisher is afraid that he will be the fall guy in the event of a crackdown. During the meeting with Poloff, Hao was on the phone several times with the publisher, trying to alleviate his fears.

Membership Changes

14. (C) The composition of the GHA has changed somewhat over the last few months. In addition to prominent retired officials like former Guangdong Party Secretary Ren Zhongyi, former Guangdong Deputy Party Secretary Wu Nansheng and former Vice-Minister of Propaganda for CCTV Zhu Houzhe, former governor of Guangdong Province Zhu Shengling has

recently begun attending GHA meetings. Most of these officials were known for their liberal policies while in power and, as retired officials, are drawn to GHA as a place where they can share their views. The group recently lost one of its important founding fathers, Guangdong political cartoonist, Liao Bingxiong, who died last month. Liao was Guangdong's most famous cartoonist, renowned for drawing cartoons critical of the Cultural Revolution.

15. (C) The GHA has increased its membership of intellectuals and "dissidents" as well. Professor Yao did not elaborate on who these dissidents were, but said at least 10 labor rights "weiquan" (Rights Protection Movement) activists attend GHA events. Yao said that some of South China's most notable Rights Protection Movement leaders, such as lawyer Tang Jingling and Zhongshan University professor Ai Xiaoming, were not involved with the group.

Increased Pressure

16. (C) Guangdong authorities have increased their oversight of GHA since August. Yao said that "every month things become more and more sensitive," and that Citizen magazine, in particular, has become "too sensitive." He described how certain members of the group have had their cell phones tapped and said that Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers have played their recorded voices back to members over the phone.

17. (C) A representative of the National Security Bureau recently warned President Hao that the National Security Bureau is "completely aware" of the activities of the GHA. He said that certain members, including Professor Yao, were on the government's blacklist. The representative told Hao to "keep his followers in check" and suggested that the

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group should stop publishing Citizen. Lectures and discussions would be allowed as such "undocumented" activities could be plausibly denied. Additionally, a secretary to Guangdong Party Secretary Zhang Dejiang

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recently told President Hao that Zhang reads the magazine; the group should be careful what it publishes.

Future Publications

18. (C) Because of the recent pressure on the group, Hao and Yao have decided to withhold the publication of the tenth (October) issue of Citizen, which was to include a number of controversial articles, until next year. One article focused on the recent Shanghai Party Secretary corruption case. According to Yao, some of the Citizen staff believed that Chen Liangyu had been planning to step down prior to print publications disclosure of corruption charges; Citizen staff also apparently have other information which is not yet publicly available. The tenth issue was also expected to include an article about political protests in Taiwan and argued that protests are useful for democratic reform in Taiwan.

Other Activities

19. (C) In addition to Citizen, the GHA has a number of other projects it hopes to develop; among them a website (under construction), a citizen rights textbook for children, a "Citizen Exchange Center," where citizens could share views on local government, and a "Humanity Research Center" to examine human rights and other legal issues. The exchange center and research center are based on similar "Civil Society Centers" at UCLA and the London

¶10. (C) Because of political sensitivities, the GHA is constantly seeking cover for its aggressive political agenda. For example, according to Yao, the organization's title, the "Guangdong Humanistic Association" was specifically chosen because "most people do not know what 'humanistic' means." If the group had used the term "human rights," it would never have received permission to register under the Guangdong Civil Affairs Bureau. Additionally, representatives from the Guangdong Civil Affairs authorities have told that Hao they have nominally agreed to create the "Citizen Exchange Center" and "Humanity Research Center" because the project would use the word "exchange" (jiaoliu) rather than education (jiaoyu). So far GHA's most successful project has been the distribution of about 20,000 citizen rights textbooks to urban and rural schools and juvenile detention centers. Yao said that the reaction to the books has been very positive.

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